

REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

154 EAST 46TH STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017
TEL. (212) 889-2277

STATEMENT

BY

HIS HONOUR MR. MOKGWEETSI E. K. MASISI, M.P.,

**THE VICE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 72ND SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**21 SEPTEMBER 2017
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**



Please check against delivery.

**Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I feel deeply honoured and privileged to deliver this Statement on behalf of the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Lt. General Dr. Seretse Khama Ian Khama.
2. On behalf of my delegation, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the Seventy-Second Session of the UN General Assembly.
3. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your mandate.
4. In the same vein, please allow me to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, for his stewardship of the Seventy-First Session.
5. May I also seize this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres and to wish him an enjoyable and successful tenure at the helm of our world body.
6. We also thank our erstwhile Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his leadership and the valuable contribution he has made towards advancing the mandate of our organization over the past decade.

Mr. President,

7. We are gathered here at the United Nations because we share a common destiny. Despite its imperfections, the United Nations remains the only universal organization that has the moral authority and legitimacy to seek global solutions to the challenges we face.

8. Botswana is of the firm conviction that as Member States, we collectively hold the will and the power to change the world for the better, and for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Sustainable Development

Mr. President,

9. Botswana welcomes the theme of this Session namely, ***"Focusing on People: Striving for Peace and a Decent Life for All on a Sustainable Planet."***
10. We strongly feel that this theme is pertinent because it reinforces the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the global community adopted on 25th September 2015 as **"a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" or "a charter for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership in the twenty-first century."**
11. This theme appropriately draws our attention to the 4 of the 5 **Ps** of the 2030 Agenda, namely **People, Planet, Prosperity and Peace**. It recognises the importance of focusing on people and improving their lives, as the main beneficiaries of development and the greatest resource, in order to realize peace and development on a sustainable and resilient pathway. By so doing, it recognises the nexus between peace and security, sustainable development and climate change.
12. In this regard, the 2030 Agenda notes that **"There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development."** It is therefore imperative that we prioritise the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in order to achieve sustainable development and address climate change.

13. Regarding People, I am pleased to state that the Government of Botswana embarked on a series of multi-stakeholder consultations involving both the public and private sector, civil society, local authorities, development partners and the academia in the formulation of our National Development Plan 11 (2017-2023) and Vision 2036 (2017-2036), which are aligned to the 2030 Agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063.
14. We purposefully undertook extensive consultations to ensure that our national priorities reflect our people's needs and aspirations.
15. We hold the view that our people have a right to sustainable development and improved quality of life. We therefore must pursue these twin objectives as a moral and political imperative.
16. It is important to recall that when we adopted Agenda 2030 some two years ago, we acknowledged that every Goal, every Target and every Indicator in that Agenda represents a step towards a better world.
17. We recognised the need for each country, based on its needs and circumstances, to formulate a unique set of actions to achieve the Universal Goals we set for ourselves.
18. We also recognised that Innovation, Science and Technology will be critical catalysts in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

19. In line with the theme, our two national development frameworks place heavy emphasis on improving the quality of life of all people in Botswana through acceleration of socio-economic development and provision of better education, healthcare, housing and tackling extreme poverty, income inequality, gender inequality and unemployment, especially among the youth and women.
20. Driven by our strong desire to build an inclusive, peaceful and prosperous society based on the respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, we accordingly adjusted our empowerment programmes in order to ensure that they cater for all vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society, including women and girls, youth, the elderly, people with disabilities, and children.
21. To this end, the top priorities of our National Development Plan 11 are human capital development, social development, developing diversified sources of economic growth, sustainable use of natural resources, consolidation of good governance and strengthening of national security, and implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system.
22. In order to ensure that all our people live in dignity, the Government of Botswana took a bold policy decision to shift from poverty reduction to eradication of extreme poverty, resulting in a marked reduction of the proportion of the population living in abject poverty or below US\$1.25 per day from 24.5% in 2002/2003 to 6.4% in 2009/2010. This is a notable achievement considering the fact that in 1985/1986, 59% of the population was living in poverty.
23. We identified sustainable use of natural resources as one of the main priorities of our national development agenda to ensure that the natural wealth of our country benefits both present and future generations.

24. To address youth unemployment, the Government introduced youth empowerment programmes such as the Youth Development Fund, the National Service Programme, and the Internship Programme. For the past two decades, more than 25% of the total Government's annual budget has been invested in education and skills development.
25. In addition, we have implemented a number of flagship programmes, the centerpiece of which is the Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP), which was introduced to stimulate the economy and address the infrastructure deficit.
26. We are also proud that Botswana was among the countries which shared their 2030 Agenda implementation experience under the auspices of the recently held High Level Political Forum (HLPF) Voluntary National Review exercise.

Climate Change

Mr. President,

27. Botswana fully supports the observation made in the 2030 Agenda that **"Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development."**
28. In this regard, we welcome the entry into force of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and reaffirm our commitment to this Agreement.
29. Botswana is pleased to be among the countries which signed and ratified this Agreement before the achievement of the threshold of ratifications for its entry into force.
30. We appeal to all countries to remain steadfast in their defence and protection of the integrity of the Paris Agreement.

31. We reiterate our appeal to the Government of the United States of America to re-consider its decision to withdraw from this landmark Agreement, which marks a universal effort by the international community to tackle challenges of climate change. As you would be aware, the challenge of climate change requires collective action, as no single country can successfully address this challenge on its own. It is as if the recent Hurricanes and their disastrous effects was to underscore to the American Administration that climate change is real.
32. If there is anything positive we have learnt from these Hurricanes, it is that it has been able to bring people in the affected States and wider America together, be they young or old, black, hispanic or white or whatever religious persuasion.
33. We also welcome the recent convening by the President of the UN General Assembly of the first ever Ocean Conference in New York, pursuant to Sustainable Development Goal 14.
34. Even though Botswana is a landlocked country, we are impacted upon one way or the other by the Ocean environment.
35. We also have a strategic interest in benefitting from marine resources.
36. It is for this reason that we actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which we subsequently became a State Party.

International Humanitarian Appeals

37. I am delighted to announce to this august body that Botswana has responded positively to international humanitarian appeals which have been made from time to time in response to humanitarian calamities which afflicted a number of countries, including the extremely devastating famine in Somalia.
38. Consistent with our caring and compassionate nature, we will continue to do everything we can, within the limit of our meagre resources, to extend assistance to fellow members of the human family who are in dire need of humanitarian relief.

International Peace and Security:

Mr. President,

39. According to its Charter, the UN was created **"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"**, and yet peace continues to elude us, especially in some parts of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world.
40. There are continuing reports of raging conflicts, gross human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions.
41. The situation in South Sudan, in particular, continues to be a cause for grave concern.
42. The country is virtually on a precipice.
43. The people of that country are yet to enjoy the peace that the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan was widely expected to deliver.

44. We therefore appeal to IGAD countries as the main guarantors of this Agreement, to constructively engage the leaders and political stakeholders in South Sudan, with a view to getting them to unconditionally commit to the full and effective implementation of the Agreement.

Syria

Mr. President,

45. The political, security and humanitarian situation in Syria remains catastrophic.
46. Botswana is on record to have consistently expressed disappointment at the Security Council's failure to take decisive action on the situation in Syria. This is because some Permanent Members of the Council have from time to time vetoed resolutions which were aimed at addressing the political and humanitarian crisis in that country.
47. In view of this unfortunate scenario, Botswana believes that the international community should always resort to using the moral power and authority of the General Assembly whenever there is paralysis in the Security Council.
48. We also fully support referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order that those responsible for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity can be held accountable for their actions.

North Korea

Mr. President,

49. Botswana is deeply concerned about the unrelenting and blatant contravention of international law and UN resolutions by North Korea through its continuous testing of ballistic missiles. These despicable acts by North Korea pose a threat, not only in the Korean Peninsula, but throughout the Pacific region and the world at large. It is obvious to us as it should be to everyone else that North Korea is being assisted by others to develop its missiles and nuclear technology. They are therefore, as much to blame for these missile and nuclear tests as North Korea is itself.
50. We therefore appeal to the international community to work in unison and take prompt and decisive action that will force North Korea to adhere to the values and principles of the United Nations Charter. Inaction is not an option in the face of this adversity. Regime change must be brought about in order to remove once and for all this everlasting threat to peace in that region and give the North Korea people a hope for a life of freedom and prosperity.

Western Sahara

Mr. President,

51. It is reprehensible that Western Sahara remains the only non-self governing territory on the African continent.
52. We therefore reiterate our support for the people of Western Sahara in the pursuit of their just and inalienable right to self-determination.

53. We strongly feel that it is high time that they are allowed to exercise this right through an independent and impartial plebiscite under the supervision of the United Nations.
54. The Saharawis have waited long enough for this to happen.

Palestine

55. We similarly support the people of Palestine in their legitimate struggle for sovereignty and independent statehood.
56. As a gesture of our support and solidarity, I am pleased to report that Botswana established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine on the 8th March 2017.

Terrorism

Mr. President,

57. Botswana strongly condemns terrorism, violent extremism and racial intolerance in all their forms and manifestations.
58. In this regard, it is deeply regrettable that we have recently witnessed a spate of terrorist attacks on innocent people and governments around the world.
59. I am delighted to state that we stand firmly in solidarity with the governments and people of the countries concerned and also extend our deepest sympathy to them.
60. We need to be constantly mindful of the fact that no single country is immune from terrorist attacks. These attacks are a stark reminder of the ferocious nature of terrorism.
61. The international community must therefore urgently take concerted action to resolutely fight this scourge.

Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. President,

62. Botswana fully supports the international community's efforts towards nuclear disarmament.
63. We also reaffirm our commitment to international instruments that ban weapons of mass destruction such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention.
64. In this respect, we welcome the recent adoption by the UN General Assembly of a legally binding Treaty to prohibit the production of nuclear weapons.
65. We are fully convinced that only a nuclear-free world would guarantee a safer future for our populations.

Human Rights Council Membership

Mr. President,

Botswana greatly values the opportunity it was given to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights through its membership of the Human Rights Council for two consecutive terms.

66. With the imminent termination of our tenure in the Council in December this year, I wish to reaffirm that we will continue to work earnestly with the international community to advance the global human rights agenda and towards all the people of the world to live in democracies where human rights and the rule of law are upheld.

67. Our advocacy on human rights is premised on the firm belief that society's aspirations for sustainable development will remain a mirage lest we re-double our collective efforts towards equality and human dignity.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

68. Permit me to conclude by urging everyone of us to maintain the momentum on the implementation of Agenda 2030. Let us summon our collective wisdom and strength, coupled with our singularity of purpose to deliver real change for the benefit of the people we represent.

69. Botswana pledges to be an active and reliable partner in the common endeavour to create a better and safer world of shared prosperity, where no people, no region and no country will feel left behind.

70. This is the best legacy we can collectively bequeath to posterity.

I thank you for your kind attention.

*** *** *** *** ***